

ON THE OVERLAND AND OTHER POEMS

By
FREDERICK MORTIMER CLAPP



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ΤΟ
Μ. C. C.

τεῷ τούτῳ μεγνύμενον φρενί

ON THE OVERLAND.

Out of the desolation and the emptiness,
the vast flat, gaunt green land,
out of the pale, primeval, blue sky and the sweet sun,—
the horizon's gold and silver bastioned, purple-piled cloud
mountain ranges
of thunder storms that bring thin rains at night,—
speak, O thou mute and mighty earth-transfusing spirit,
speak and break
the spell of the phantasmal, hurtling, inert, smiling day.
Voice of the dull-brown haycocks, listless windmills, the barren,
squat, meek, lonely little houses,
the glittering, restless, wind-streaked chrysoprased corn,—
stark dearth of red earth miles on miles, gigantic palisaded
rock-ruins crumbling by dry rivers, thistles, daisies,
lank fences stalking out against the sky
threading the waste,—
voice of the soul of this treeless land where never
the feet of men were set till yesterday,
speak while the train
rolls making rhythms, rattling roaring, clicking crashing,
caught
out of the emptiness, rhythms of space, sledge-riveted fast and
faster
into my spirit, till my spirit makes its wings of them,—
nay more, bid thou God's self speak, as from west to eastern
sea
wheels whirl me hurl me, hissing, jarring, being bound beyond
the sea . . .

Let Him look out with me, with me remember
what else were but a hopeless cirque of changes,
the blank stupendous ages of the making,—
winter, spring,

the fierce, still summer, autumn when gigantic
winds hurled down His heavens on His earth,—
snow, the endless, soothing, saving, silent whiteness,—
as æon into less bleak æon crept.

O world divine!

add thou this to thy story, this remember,
how I caught up upon this beating iron thing,
saw clear as God sees,

in one moment seized in my life His life,—

how I, who foresaw seeing all with Him,

am all this vast land's dull unaging change, the gorgeous
harvest,

and all the blue, pale sky, the fields, the houses, hills,—

I who am my love who sits across the ocean!

O to be for her sake, being her, creation's self and God's self,
heart that feels it all and hand that makes and moves

continent and ocean, earth and heavens,

as grinding still, still breathless, ponderous, arrowlike, relent-
less,

hour on hour we roar.

The bare land twists and twists and falls behind,

the cross-treed poles jump up, and flickering drift to nothing—
dots across the world's edge—

the eager wires, sagging, heaving on,

pierce the thin air with windless murmurings

far flashing light-swift thoughts from sea to sea.

But thou, more strong to grip life vast and whole,

greenly to grasp the great world like spring grass,

bluely to hold it mine like sun-blue seas,

to see beyond man, nature, fathoming God,—

be quicker than thy dreams, O soul of mine . . .

speed, speed, thou more than God, thou throbbing, whistling
pulse of all things,—

life, love . . .

and, O to be with you, my love, to be with you!
Desire makes all our fiery, shouting speed, stagnation,
makes as the dead past nations yet to spring here
throned in the pregnant waste grown radiant,

and less than figments of a dying dream
the æon-built earth, the building God
who knows no more than day and night, blue sky, green
earth,—who blindly makes and passes,
groping with mighty hands that shaping feel
ever from nothing into nothingness . . .

I,—O my all-embracing soul, my life's God-conquering, God-
creating soul-vibration,—

I listen, care what has been, what will yet be,
love, being you, who fly to you?

REVERBERATION.

The voice of the sea
is the past unfurled,
unfurled in the face
of things to be
till the end of space
and the end of time;

in the dreary chime
that swells and swings
through the song it sings
to the dumb dead shore,
a passion clings
and a grief that wrings
the heart of God;

all death-doomed things
find utterance deep
of that despair
which haunts the grave,
in the crowning sweep
and hopeless fall
of wave on wave;

it binds with a sigh
the shores of the world,
it mocks with the cry
of a hope's recall
all things that die
and know not why;

like a moan from the lips
of the dead it slips
down barren sands

in far-off lands,
where round grey ships
of rich emprise,
that sailed in vain,
the slow tides rise
and ebb again;

it has known all things
since first the light
beneath God's wings
of pity and grace
broke o'er its face,
and it sees afar
how the last dim star
winks out its flight
through the last long night;

for the voice of the sea
is the past unfurled,
unfurled in the face
of things to be
till the last day dies
in the womb of space,
and the dead arise,
and death is dead,
and time is fled.

A SPOT OF SUN.

Through the torn curtain,
suddenly,
a spot of sunshine falls on the floor.
Mottled by the window-pane
it quivers like a golden lizard on the red and yellow pine
boards;

it is silent and very bright; it creeps
and grows and crawls up to my shoe . . .
I feel its warmth in my foot.

Will life transmit no more
of its arrowy all-experiencing
journey through space and time
than this trembling little silvering spot?
O elusive bright creeping of the flame of light!
how humbly and how strangely
you strew your fragments round me!
What do you keep of the æonic conflagration
of the titanic sun
that this fly may walk unharmed across your splendour?
What of the all-pervading glittering arms
you lock the shining sea, the green earth, in,—
you accountable to life for all the flowers?
Can you forget the rumble of hiving cities
where you sow men as prodigally
as in the fields your yellow flowers?

My room is bright with your creeping.
I read an old history and see in you
the glinting spears of Alexander
creeping toward Babylon
beside the Euphrates

that writhes through the land
like a broad sleepy serpent
with rippling scales of gold.

The piping of young birds I hear
in the cypress bough by the window,
flies humming
and a breeze in the surf-loud gum-tree.

REVELATION.

Over the roofs the shrilling swallows sang,
swift circling sounds winged in the deepening sky
where the blue twilight thinned,
and dreams that brought no words up to your lips
came dimly to your face.
Screaming they rushed along the quiet air,
as if caught up upon a whirling wind
shot hotly through the cool light softening where
the stars came not to seek their changing place.
And something passed, and I,—who knew not why
(though groping on from trace to strange, faint trace
left by your wandering eyes upon my heart)
your shadow should have broken that eclipse
life cast upon my life, and could not find,
in any dimmest corner of my mind,
the primal, unremembered, shadowy thing
that drew you to me, and me, love, to you,—
saw, as you turned and heard the swallows sing,
sharp-eddying through the twilight's breathless blue,
as through a rifted memory, how you knew
that unremembered thing,—and I knew too;
so when my lips felt yours, and darkness flowed
in on me making silence where we were,—
a visible silence like a mist that glowed,—
I felt along my blood the lost thing stir
familiar like a vision that had been
my life in some far-off, forgotten place,—
the fate behind my fate and born with me,
though only then, after what wanderings, seen
clear like a dawn upon your listening face.

THE QUARRY OF DREAMS.

I stand upon a hilltop with the sun
and call the old numb mountains, and they stir,
where tumbled fugitives in huddled heaps,
they lie beyond the ravaged plains of thought.

I cry across my smouldering thoughts and they,
grovelling and hoary, turn up whimpering eyes
full of the embers of exultant towers,—
seared towers of my miraculous myriad-domed
high-windowed city of the fire-charred plain . . .
My thoughts have all been conquered and laid waste.
Only untameable, unalterable
things, the sea, the mountains and the night,
live, and I call upon them and they come.

The mountains creep up to the creeping sea,
the night, with impotent footfall and scarred eyes,
climbs where I stand upon my crumbling hill;
my strength has gone out into them, my life
trembles from me into their hungry sleep.

High on the fog-swept hillside lies a deep
deserted quarry, dead womb of the ruined
arched seven-fold gates and columned streets of thought;
and in its darkness hover wisps of sound,—
perplexed sounds once in sculptural intricacy
shaped by impatient hammers and swift steel
into my peopled porticoes of the plain . . .

I listen and I hear the crumbling and
upbuilding of innumerable
cities in impermanence as of old,—
wide-soaring undulations of lost dreams,

presentiments forgotten that still cling
like wind-shred mists about a headland's crags,
slow-fingered mutterings of imprisoned visions,
heart-bursts irreconcilable, and shout
and tense black jagged throb of ebon drums.

Untameable, unalterable things
crowd up upon me, and my very life
trembles out from me to their hungry sleep;

but now I know not mountains, night nor sea,—
though all my thought lies levelled and laid waste,
and I for desolation call them,—shall
blot out the forsaken quarry where I hew,
among these echoes of rent symphonies,
new moated cities for thought's plundered plains.

PROSCRIPTION.

There is something strange and stealthy in your eyes
that turns my heart upon itself in vain,
for I have never known this subtle pain,
this grief which is too frail for tears or sighs;
beyond my fears, beyond my dreams, it lies
in far-off lands where days and flowers wane
forgotten, and grey, unregretful rain
crumbles the fragile sunset ere it dies;
something it is like lips we cannot see,
that, faint through odorous breathings of the night,
blow mists of music when pale fingers light
the hollow mountain of the stars with morn,—
something it is that knew ere earth was born
the incommunicable sadness of the sea.

TRIBUTE.

Love binds mine eyes with silence, O my love,
though spring in deep roots and chill ground foment
this beryl leafiness, this yellow snow
of broom, and blood of roses,—sifts this mist
of shimmering poppies on the saffron hills;
though his blue breath bring shoals of clouds that swim,—
enormous, gold-finned, mute and sapphire-eyed,—
their shoreless pale sea staring at the world;
though from dark birth-pulse in the sun-searched earth
his rapturous tremor wing through death to love,
bursting in leaf and petal, wind, cloud, sun,
joyous, phantasmal as the unslumbering mind,—
Love will not loosen winter from my heart
nor yet unclasp the inarticulate,
the undelivered urgency of love,
nor yield me speech I strain to, mightier still
than his.

Love binds mine eyes with silence. Though I gaze
as the sun gazes, suck life's sunshine up,
aspire as topmost leaves of young trees tossed
by morning showers,—
though hope's flame in me utterly consume
to white dust all the faggots of the soul,
he binds mine eyes with silence! This is praise
beyond all lyric mystery fading now
(even as I yearn unenvious of his voice)
of birth or spring!

THE UTTER BRINK.

I know not why to-day it is I feel
a formless sudden hand upon my heart
close tightening fingers; mists of numbness steal
into my throbbing brain; I seem to sink
through seas of night where black clouds break apart
before me falling to the utter brink
of space beyond the stars; vague voices cry
drearily around me in the night and die
like ebbing waves upon a hollow reef,—
strange strangled whispers of an ancient grief
they seem, and faint and far-off; then, O near,
as if my dead blood murmured in my ear,
they sob, and something drags upon my breath;
then comes a face pallid for fear and sin
with wild dim eyes that drink the darkness in,
and on my mouth I feel the mouth of death.

GUM-TREES.

To-day like lips the mysteries
are parted of these tremulous trees—
these supple soaring gum-trees; I
have made my own their destinies,
like them I know the elusive sky,
like them I snare in a tangled net
of shifting boughs dawn, noon, sunset.

The mauve smooth stems swing skyward,
sunward,
I hold my face up to the rustling shower,
the green-grey spray and silvery shiver
of sickle leaves;
with their sap I climb, with their leaves I quiver,
I float with them on the endless river,
the shoreless river of life and spring;
till sudden lithe winds seize the trees
and then I sink deep under seas
to an inverted world where earth
is poured along the tides of birth
tumultuous, and in my brain
I feel repass and pass again
the shuttles of clear ecstasies . . .
Remorseless winds invade the trees—
my spirit swirls and cries aloud
and shudders like a rooted thing;
great savage winds assail the trees—
they shake and foam and fling themselves
across the blue beach of the sky;
like spindrift where a steep shore shelves
they crash and boom against the wind,
surge up and writhe and staggering lift

indomitable arms and, blind
with grim rage, grapple with the sky
and beat upon a silent cloud.

Shimmering green glitter of these sickle leaves!
The sudden naked winds are dead,
the dream fades out before my eyes;
I see the flickering blithe sky flit
in through the dangling downpour, it
winks myriad wings like myriad eyes;
a sweet deep amber-breathing scent
of dead laid leaves and scaled curled bark
rises like mist through the level light;
a bird's song spiring soars and dies.
The glistening waves of the wind run up
the brown lank grass and lick the sky
at the bare bright top of the hill; the mauve
smooth languid stems swayed to and fro
sweep fiery cliffs of crumbling clouds.

And I sink again deep under seas
to their inverted world where earth
is poured along the tides of birth,
and from green depths, far out o'er bars
of night the quickening sunset melts,
I hear the seething urge of life
rush legion-winged against the stars.

IMPRISONED.

Ah love, here, soothing sorrow born of dreams,
where nature bends to artifice, a hand
precise and genial lays, with watchful wand,
measure on flower and tree. Here, half-seen, gleams
gravely the marble, gravely the pool's rim; streams
in white clean channels purr; shorn sharp trees stand
postured like emerald peacocks and the sand
of paths I walk with symbols quaintly teems.

Ah love, here soothing sorrow, how shall I
from clipped hedge and clear fountain and the prim
starred song of flowers weave a patterned whim
wild hope may grow to and be beautiful,
while, like my thoughts of you made visible,
sailing uncharted seas the wind-free clouds steer by?

KRAKATOA.

This, like a wave the whole sea lifts and fills,
cliff-faced, sharp-heaving, white as snow-tipped hills—
this tidal surge and impulse of the soul—
shivers life's ice-fanged crater's glittering bowl
and, bursting ere the mind foretells or wills,
sweeps up like fire time's riven dust of ills
flung from the sudden earthquake of the heart
in thronging clouds wherethrough love's lightnings start,—
dead ills and dust now, ills erewhile the flowers
thought sowed on life's slope and seared seeds thereof,—
sweeps youward on a storm that strains and streams
beyond the night of memory, in what hours
(Ah, star-blown ashes shot with light of dreams!)

to flush a sunset for the eyes I love?

SEARCH-LIGHTS.

We sat until the clinking coals were filmed
with rifted caving ashes, we in whom
our spirit's sharp vibration turned to light
the dark far-wielded mind. The little room,
lit with un baffled interplay
of shifting unsheathed whetted thought,
shone as we sought,
through the uncloven night that girds the soul,
to strike the implacable steel of vision
beyond the dark's derision.

We talked by love of light enthralled; the last
blue-flaming coal
from fire-white chilled to ashen white, and I
through a wide window saw against the sky
search-lights of unseen ships
that in the swell-swept offing rode
at guard upon the quivering thousand-eyed
sleep of the city;
blinding they flashed and blazed and slid
upon the impassive silent night,
swept and brandished,
wheeled and slanting,
sword on shivered broad sword parried,
whirled, uphurled, and laid at rest
tremulous against the west;
wing with startled wing in flight,
rainbow-dyed;
fingering scintillations mowed
down like yellow grain; crisp-plied
swing of fan on flaming fan;

nebulous flocking fiery stains
that on the sky sprang up and ran
wind-swift across invisible wide plains.

Shuttling they swarmed and shook,
sheer fanes they built up with the poles
for base, the stars for buttresses,—immeasurable frames
of interlacing vaultings, phantom groins,
tower and portal,
apse and aisle supernal,—
the spiritual city broad as space
and immemorial
as time.

I watched,
and watching heard a silence fall
at last
on our fleet fire-side speech
the proud soul sifted with its exaltation.
Out in the night a slow thick-throated horn
groaned and was still and groaned and seemed to call
to fainter whimpering cries effaced
upon some drifting nightmare of the sea . . .
The slow thick-throated horn was numb
and strangled by an eyeless thing
stealthy, malign and dumb.

But still
above the black insidious sea,
upflung, far-flaring ceaselessly,
the spectral search-lights unsubdued
crossed and recrossed,
retraced, renewed

kaleidoscopic patterns of unborn
dreams on the chill,
low-creeping, life-obliterating wing
and toothless, padded prowling of the fog.

TERMINATIONS.

I saw when autumn's flame was lit afar
on golden hills that couch the sinking sun,
in a great sunset earth and sky burn one
for glory, while a breathless eastern star,
first ministrant of night, withheld the bar
of darkness, and I knew some goal was won,
foredoomed in ages dead and passion-spun
by God's own dreams that were not what they are.

Ah, like some mighty drama's end it seemed,
crowning the pageant of ten thousand years,
as, burdened with a mystery, I dreamed
of pallid lilies sear in strange decays
and shadowy faces mounting shadowy ways
with frail songs ebbing faint in falling tears.

CLEARED.

Exquisite indwelling cry of rain
out on these white and marching infinite
wave-armies staggering shoreward through the night!
The unwitherable strength of sky and sea
wavers and desolate and bodiless,
heedless and indecipherably driven
under the exquisite bleak cry of rain,
convulses at the unshaken foot of this
tide-eaten crag in obdurate agonies
and reabsorbs its foam of frantic hands.
Now scarce a sigh to the long foamless beach
clings, a trailing mist of ghostly light
clutches at darkness as wind-weary birds
clutch at the smooth face of a basalt crag.
Tortuous grey stricken sobbing of the rain!
My mind precipitate in the chill of thought
sweeps over, as your cry upon the sea,
the mutinous retreat of reflux life,
till transubstantiate on the baffled tide,
a phantom in the foam-frail prism of time,
it reassumes identity and leans,
a tower of shuddering sails through bursting spray,
far seaward into vastness and the night
with swung blurred lights that gleam and reel and fade
to me who turn across the unearthly sands
to let my alien body move again
among the patterned granite streets and past
the unsearchable windows of the lives of men.

PARIS: AN HOUR OF SPRING.

A tram-car banging clanging to l'Étoile
down the drab Boulevard des Invalides,
trees cropped to their last twig awaiting spring,
nurses and children trundling hoop and doll,
women and soldiers sauntering, the breed
of Fashion swathed in supple stuffs that cling,
rocked in slow cabs or swirled with lurch and swing
in swift soft-purring motors, and the need
of air and light and joy on every face . . .
O great French life that darkest agony
leaves on your brave bright features scarce a trace
now you are free in your regenerate hour!
The very streets are song and your lean tower
bites like a hurled lance through the astonished sky!

NOON.

It is twelve o'clock noon,
whistles blowing, bells ringing;
half the day is gone.

I sit here filled with menacing thoughts
that grow up out of a bird's singing
as the jinnee grew
in smoke and flame
from the fabulous bottle
found on the beach.

It is twelve o'clock noon,
half the day is gone.
And the morning, when I awoke so undeservedly
out of the blessed numbness of sleep,
is now to me the same
as Pharaoh,
as alien and distant and uncommunicative
as the pyramids.

I live in a wandering dot
that was once so many other days with their sunshine,—
like to-day's very sunshine,—
and yet are now dead and so far now forever.
Can I never grip my hour,—
this hour that narrows to the pen-point with which I write
and, between the stroke begun and ended,
is with yesterday and the dust of eternal night?

Is nothing stored up,
no valour, no loftiness, no ardour?
Yesterday I walked over the tawny hills above the sea . . .
The sea, does it still lap those rocks
though the film of it that came into me
is now with irretraceable eternity?

Dear love! and you, you will not help me?
stay with your all-intelligent eyes and seeing smile
the incessant dissolution?

Have you no power, no art
to set me free,
your captive, from my jiggling dot of life
that skims on unexpanded,
between waking and sleeping,
through all the evanescent sights and sounds
of living?

Do you not see how steep the hour just lived through falls
away?

how steep the gulf this coasting minute edges along
of the yawning future?

Reach out your hand, the place is dizzy, I
have found no foothold . . .

Dear, alone there is
no foothold I would find.

TRANSMUTATION.

Sunset : the city shudders vast and gaunt
and drives its grim jaws harder in the hill ;
the slim moon sinks where white as frost the chill,
windless bay shimmers ; gulls in legions haunt
the paven waters ; sinister their cry
and sinister those huge dun wings which ply
their shadows rising to them as they dip ;
from cloud-swathed islands veers a fire-beaked ship.

Thought eats out life's transparent shell and leaves
a mirage and a silence ; like a leaf
I flutter through the landscape of my thought ;
night : where the city stood a columned sheaf
of giant towers crushes a voice that grieves
amongst them with some hateful wrong distraught.

MIST.

A mist has eaten up the prostrate land;
I hear the wingless silence of the mist
crawling upon the glazed eyes of the hours—
dim dying hours some shadowy plague has kissed;
I feel a stealthy sickness in these flowers
whose petals rain inaudibly in showers
around me; and I cannot understand
the thought that eats my life up like a mist.

I listen and remember how they were
the hours that thrilled at dawn across the sea
singing to me a spray-sharp ecstasy
perfumed with golden perfume of these flowers,—
but I am all a sickness, and in showers
their poisoned petals, by some bleak decree,
across the stagnant silence of the hours,
keep falling, falling through these mists that blur
out all the numb dumb land and soundless sea.

My thought has eaten up my life like mist;
a mist has eaten up the sea and land;
the flowers have no petals left to shed
upon the stricken land where all is dead,
save what not death himself can understand—
this crawling mist that eats away the land,
—this thought that eats my life up like a mist.

A BIRTHDAY TOKEN.

Life's self resumes life's story year by year,
glad with earth's gladness, if her smile mask not
some unconceived deep desolation. Else
what sings this bronzed green the gum-tree flings
lyric in fountain-shiverings that a bird
utters clear-throated throbbing sight with sound?
Ask and be healed, O heart self-doomed to watch,
from thought's domed palace-prison, myriad leaves
the stars unfold and buds the breeze breaks—watch
the eternal sequence songful and resigned
of life's bright background's manifolded change!
Which lives, my thought or this cloud-landscape spun
of all unheeding days? O flower of broom
so yellow in the dawn when cypresses
hug to their writhed arms night, O hyacinth
that lingers and anemone and rose,
silence thought's humming wings and tell me: she,
has she more kinship with him or with this,
this amethystine spray of tamarisk
that falls not but through soft successive days
melts into green and cheers the envious lawn?
Is there some mask of desolation deep
in life's resuming life so? Speak for me,
tokens and fragments of the fading spring!

THE RIVER.

Crisp-flashing like a snow-born brook
whose glittering voice is splashed among
wild flowers that sway and to it chant
its ceaseless utter ecstasy,
life limpid as the starlight swirls,
enfranchised from eternity, and curls
down the white hills with laughter shook
from pool to blue pool of the years ;

till, through some deep unscalable
hewn canyon of the mind,
a yellow river of the past
bescummed with malady, it find,
past deafening caves and maniac falls,
past labyrinths of leprous walls,
the desert's ghastly noon at last.

Ah, the straight gaze of vision's sun,
the untempered living heat of thought !
Like a stunned snake in agony
it writhes out into gleaming bogs
where even bitter grasses die,
there, hard as fired chalcedony,
to flash its topaz to the sky.

LOVE'S LANDSCAPE.

Over the hill-engirdled plain,
the vine-garlanded, grape-laden,
where lived my love I went
breathing the dew-chill, mist-warm, early sunshine,
low-slanting, opalescent,
till I was all a radiance of its splendour,
with such hungry passion drank I.

Swift the landscape wheeled away and wheeled away and lent
to me sense revived of harvests,
spirit harvests rich divinely she had meant
but to be love's seeming setting
ere is bent
over us the scythe obscure, for the first time and the last time,
in the fire and the rapture
of life's, love's
supreme event.

Tasselled corn,
furrowed fields,
golden-green and green and gold things came and went;
gleamed the reaper's hook,
gleamed the brown feet of the girls that stoop and glean,
gleamed the villas high on grey hills,
gleamed the river mist
that sent
round each moveless cypress and each flickering troubled
poplar
purple curling tendrils rent
by the shifting of the feet of little winds;
rose the scent
of a sea breathed over flowers,

opulent flowers,
and blown from far away,
as her thoughts are blown to me,—
blown far and faint and tender
over gardens of our dreams
from her soul's autumnal sea.

O autumn land and autumn-sweetened sun!
you are like my love, you are her, and my eyes
commemorate her gazing at you now.
With this throbbing fluttering to you of my heart
I give you all significance, in her
begun
and in her ended. Destinies
are visions manifested. You have won
her destiny through me; I see her stir
in you, O landscape beating with her heart!

A CITY.

The jar and thunder of your blind great heart
dies never and forever your eyes ply
their hungry lingerings of a lecherous smile; ^
you have been passion's prostitute and are
life's,—you that madly love him though the cry
of death cleaves to your tongue and like a dial,
spread on the poisoned cage of street and mart,
your face is where all things that live and die
hang their eternal shadows, where the vile
revolve upon the fair and leave one scar
on the long memory of God, while high
above your giant ships, your pile on pile
of smoking pomp, the stars as carelessly
look down as they look on a sailless sea.

THE BELL.

A bell's abrupt deep pealing in my brain
expands a massive clamour. Stroke on stroke
it clangs a midnight, then low-hovering
its humming settles upon silence and
drowsy it shrugs a numb half-folded wing
and thrusts its claws into the corpse of time.
Like a sick outcast crumpled on himself,
having cried out for sudden ghastliness
of dreams, it sleeps as sleeps a furtive stream
that slinks with foamless mouth into the sea.

I lie back staring at the window-pane
grey with a watery greyness. In my blood
and in the steady beating of my heart
life lapses like a stream into the sea.
This phantom bell resumes fatality
and gives me kinship with the leaf that falls,
a moth's wings and the chill of stricken suns . . .
Before the vast inanimate, behind
the vast inanimate; it swings upon
a tidal wave between two lethargies.
Yet all I know for all its vigilant toll,
for all this mimic throbbing of my heart,
is that at last another day is dead.

SERENITY.

The heraldry of sunset swinging troops
over the great green hills, broad-bannered, red,
and flashed with steel a wingless mist enloops
the black cape footed steeply in the sea;
and I am vibrant with serenity
and drowse because the warlike day is dead;
I hear white blossoms puff on puff uncloze
on almond trees in a perfumed haze of light,
the waves that smile I hear and winds that doze,
I see crisp stars smote from the forge of night.

CLEAVING WATERS.

Encompassed, barriered, bounded
by crags immeasurable
the waterless bed of my spirit's wasted torrent . . .
O the debris of the hillsides and the splintered rock of heritage,
uprooted forest-shafts of what ardent other lives
where my spirit foamed and fought its way to death!

The mountains, dead and twisted with the torture of the whole
earth,
bones of a million million beings, the monstrous mountains,
these, with thoughtless riot gnawing day and night
(my life escaped the glacial slopes of birth),
I wore where song and strife were,
when strife and song were one.

O quickener and blasting sun
whose unregarding myriad hands a moment stir the mountains,
and out of a million deaths kneaded by a million ages
makes life for me, and death too makes for me,
there is no wherefore in your coming
and no whither in your going.

Encompassed, barriered, bounded
by crags inscrutably sheer,
amid the wreck of æons and the waste of all the ages,
I hew a furrow for some other spring,
some brief chance wanton river that will thaw and leap and
thunder

to water the dead chasm of my passion
with what impetus of casual life and wear
away the monstrous mountains,
the inert ancestral mountains,

and rend them with white joy of the struggle's clamorous
rhythm;

and he, whoe'er the stream is, he too shall be
withered and the channel in the living bedrock riven
be yet another's;

and the hills shall seem to change not
though through us who die they change,
they pass, are not so stable as the spray is,
are not so steadfast as the echo is.

And this remains,
this only,
this primordial,—
the eternal hunger felt in death for being,
the eternal hunger felt in life for death,
the downward unstayable rush of cleaving waters
that tear forever walls they may not rend,
the strain that makes what is seek self-annihilation,
the need that stirs what is not with a thirst once more to be,
the urgency of light wakening forever
death to life,
and waking, withering
life to death.

SURVIVAL.

A mighty meditation sets me free
into that last vast night whose mountains hang
forever round the dwindling pools of day;
a blank black land interminably still
I walk in where in æons dead a sea
ground a sharp shore; crags splintered to a fang,
grim, jagged, gigantic, cloven with ruin, nod
o'er voids unthinkable that churn and spill
soundlessly seas of darkness; silence, space,
are hollower round me than the waste that is
the unsearchable soul,—I walk as in my soul;
I am become death's own last fixed grimace,
slain life's rock-ribbed inert rent chrysalis,
outlasting doom, surviving even God.

TOLL.

I who so love you have your love on lease
renewed to me each evening by your soul,
and like a tenant in arrears I dole
you out my love, too poor to buy surcease
of loving and too proud to claim release,
bankrupt of love; that is the bitter toll,
penury's penalty, I pay to roll
back from my heart hardly the day's increase
of interest on your loving me,—so great
the burden of my love's insolvency
till you of all your spirit make me free
for love's sake; then were life the price thereof,
what were my life for that which turns my state
from bondage into empire even of love?

FACES.

Faces—

seven by seven we face one another,
knees and cheeks jiggling.

The window-cases

crash, and the chauffeur's steel clutch wobbles,
quivers like a reed as we clamour on the stones.

Faces, red puffy faces, grey lean faces,
all joggled together swaying as we lurch,
reel and recover and sit straight again,—
each of them chiselled by the generations that ride no more
(they are the earth over which in turn we wriggle),
by the fate of the ogress-bodied, whore-faced city,
by children, wife, by father, mother,
by the years that rub wind-like fingers on their flesh and search
upon their features for death's secret sign,—

strangers to one another

in spite of all the kneading tumult of the centuries, they pour
into this many-windowed lumbering thing,
into this grinding vortex of iron and wood,
whirled on forces unthinkable as God or death—
sucked up from far-off little rooms in silent little houses by
hope, by pity,
by passion of greed, fear, lust, love, exaltation, misery—they
weaving coarse or fine
around others like themselves, others still to be born through
the interminable years,

their destiny from a skein

of a million acts,—themselves the product, the intense vibra-
tion's overtone
of the cyclonic space-sweeping ages—moments ineffable each,
drops in the unending impalpable rain
of being . . .

Faces,
seven by seven,
red bloated faces like the faces of the drowned,
grey haggard-eyed haunted human faces,
so very old they are, so very tired!
What have they been, what will they be,
and what desired so fiercely that it strangles them and sears
their eyes and makes them make themselves a prison night and
day?

Cut in half by their tense-drawn newspapers they seem alone
as nothing is alone,—beyond the reach,
in the fastnesses of unimaginable life-deserted places,
of God's eye even.

A black hand shoots upon the brake,
the motor races;
we stop, we file out stooping,
faces still,
mere rags within, without,—
faces.

CONFIDENCE.

Give life her way. Let never your heart be
forearmed of thought to hold her wisdom strange.
Shall thought outsail bright life whose wings estrange
thought from his pathless path across time's sea?
Give life her way. White hope's high sovereignty
no mandate knows to stay her singing range
(bride as she is of death whose son is change)
this side the sheer coast of eternity.

The very God of Gods, and all man's creeds
are but strange flickering visions of her face,—
blind births of hunger out of terror bred.
She passes like a wind, and like dry weeds
the generations blaze up in their place
under her fire-swift footstep . . . and are dead.

LUXEMBOURG GARDENS.

In the octagonal opal of the pool
the spurting fountain's upflung swaying stem
drifts a transparent mist down the thin wind,
and close-reefed through its rainbow spatter steer,
rail under, children's boats. The evening cool
from cloud-built mountains trails a clinging hem
down the long alley of clipped trees; behind,
a palace of its own bleak memories bare,—
so little mark leaves passion upon stone!
House a queen loved are you too dull to care
that they whose cheap blood ran to rear you rule
France? The swayed jet gleans the sun's last leer
and, upflung, rains a rainbow on the pool.

RENUNCIATION.

I leave you, and my body quivering cries
against you and is dumb, and flash on flash
my nerves and brain break into crackling light
that splits a world of blackness—I am sick
because I know you know what tortures me.
You, who have lured my passion to my lips,
have strangled so my heart that I have left
nothing within but night and silence; you
have given yet taken more than you can give . . .
What would you have you have not ere you ask?
Love? But you know I love you! Life? Life's pulse
beats only time to this pulse in your throat . . .
Your eyes are gardens where I wander lost
between sharp starlight and frail odours breathed
from lips of flowers I cannot see,—I walk,
like one who dreams when dreams are agony
and desolation, in a world that mocks
me with tenuous perfume and pale sound
as of white waters dripping through the night
from precious urns in haze-blue fountains lit
with light-exhaling flowers—phantom paths
leaf-brown, and black sharp cypresses that cut
moveless between the stars; statues and bowers
that hear no sound save petals that uncurl
to life, and petals falling light to death,
or ghostly footfall of a wraithlike wind
walking like one in sleep among the flowers—
O wondrous night of gardens folding me
out of my life in eyes that are my life,
my world of passionate oblivion,—
I have forgotten all things for your sake,
I have forgotten my own self and you . . .

Yet I would call myself back, I must go
out of your wind-warm world where all is dim
and rare and wild and wonderful and cool
I cannot choose but go; it is the night
and not the garden that I fear,—yet O,
can it be only what I fear is you,
or, love, can it be only it is I?

WRAITHS.

Sometimes like shifting tides upon the shore
of windless seas my grey dreams ebb and flow,—
still seas where some frail sunset's afterglow
flickers like life round lips that breathe no more;
and sometimes like a dim forgotten lore
no tongue can read nor any heart may know,
they glimmer on torn pages that the slow
dumb hand of time turns dreamless o'er and o'er.
And evermore they change, these wraiths of pain,
they pass through crumbling gates of barren ways,
they pass and fade and ghostlike come again,—
perhaps as stars foredoomed to fail and set,
or flower-petalled passions that forget
how pale hope lingers hopeless in my days.

BOULEVARD ST. MICHEL.

White sky, black domes, one green star swinging low,
a sharp clean fall of twilight after rain,—
above the roofs, blue vapours thinned with blood,
then in a trice, the chill and purple night.

The street lamps keenly catch, white row by row,
threading the defile where with roar and strain
life's cataract traffic crashes in full flood,
and million-eyed crawls like a foam of light.

It is her hour : shop-windows glare and leer,—
chalk-faced, lips scarlet, eyebrows, eyelids kohled,
in spectral shreds of gaiety gone cold
she barter lust for life. The crowds seethe on,
the sidewalks blaze, the stars that know her peer . . .
Face after face stares blankly and is gone.

BASALT IDOLS.

The sea is empty as a desert land,
the land is barren as an empty sea,
one level waste save where like mountains stand,
immobile in their mute malignity,
twin shapes of death with ponderous feet of stone;

a timeless silence, an eternal black
immensity of silence, tightens round
their faces reared gigantic in the track
of swarming stars that, loosened from profound
abysses of the dead sky, gutter down
on the dead land. The night is like a snake
coiled lifeless on the twin vast brows of death.

BETWEEN SEA AND MOUNTAINS.

Out-throbb'd the ecstasy, bedded the pain!
Our sea-born, wave-swept passion strains away,
reed-choked in chill, still, winding, shining creeks
of thought; on life's slime-rooted stubble,—fog.
Yet day, sun-coiled, lied grandly: "Fog again
will crawl up from the vastness never!"—day
who plays us traitor with a golden face
when the tide's up, this very tide that leaks
in dribblets through a fetid flat, and sleeks
its glut, down-sucked obscurely to a grey,
a shipless, voiceless, lightless sea. Blind cog
on cog out-grinding what? What sluiced the race
of waters from the unplumbed?—More, love's peaks
shouldering the stars, what heaped them round this bog?

A SUMMONING OF DEATH.

He woke and saw it at his bedside. He knew it and longed to greet it. He could see that it knew him. Its look was an appeal for silence. He was silent. It was real and yet unreal. His raised eyes saw how tall it was. It did not move. He did not move. But all that they had said about it or he thought was like a dream. He wondered what had brought it now. His prayers? His fears? It seemed to think back over things forgotten. Through a chink in the shut blinds a noisy fly flew in, buzzed, butting the white window. Helplessly on that shrill sound he floated to the brink of still white skies alive with smothering wings. The buzzing ceased. Intent on far-off things it stood beside him listening. Then it heard something unspoken. He heard not a word. It heard and turned. He reached out . . . Agony, months of it, smote upon him like a sea. He reached out, screamed, if any scream could be in the black hollowness he plunged through. Strain as strain he would he clutched at nothing. Pain! Eternity was pain. He felt it give—an earthquake through its dense dark bulk. Again, pain! Then a dim thin voice: "Now he may live?"

THE VORTEX.

Like a mask on a night when a vast storm is drifting
the skies into doom

(though here is strange light
of witchery islanded frail mid disaster)—
these dancers a tyrannous music swirls lifting
and shifting like leaves into glow out of gloom.

Like magic fen-fires they burgeon and bloom
into pageants as pale as the sheen of old moons
across the blind face of a fathomless room,—
the dome of star-dialled, still-footed, huge ages,—
strange petal-like people
in moth-fragile moments of moth-fragile beauty to moth-
fragile tunes!

Is it only a figment's seduction, the grace
of their intimate intricate drifting and shifting,
over which hangs the mace
of eternity, heavy with vastness, and blind with the race
of ghosts that have glowed as they glow, and have whirled as
they whirl,
and have loved and been loved, and dropped down in their
place?

(Like a mask in the night,—
the mute mocking room,
and these phantoms dim music enslaves, the pale light
they create, that creates them, the ocean of doom
flowing out of the endlessness into the endlessness, pitiless,
vast,
on the stream of a dream where no birth is, no death is, no
future, no past!)

And these faces aglow
with a grace, a seduction
God's dream did not know,
in the black room's deduction,
are shadows that gather and eddy and go
to a measure of meaningless music that flows as dreams flow,—
more myriad wreaths of a brain that forgets them,
that made them and lets them
go endlessly dance,
to a throbbing that His hand in the flame of creation
wrought in them and laughed at some marvel of chance?

(Like a mask in the night
upon rhythms supernal,
they drift and unkindle a tissue of light,—
a flame-woven pagrant more baseless than mist is
at sunset, and less than the lip that unloosed is,
though lip upon lip make a light out of night.)

O passion of being, what dim, dull obstruction
self-wearing through zones is aimlessly thinned
(as at sunset a mountain of vapours' destruction
is worked of the wind),
that eternity seething through silently shatters
itself in this flickering mirage that seems
like a mask in the night,
and of substance as frail as a dream among dreams?

O passion of love, as some wave in mid ocean
swings onward, huge, heaving, blind, impotent, black,
yet alive with a universe born of its motion
and flashing like stars through the swirl of its track,—
what surging of space self-awakening scatters
these phantoms on music that beats through the breath

that nothingness, sleeping on darkness eternal,
breathes out into life,
and breathes back into death?

HYPNOTIC NIGHT.

Each day a new mirage hangs o'er the scene
of yesterday's annihilation. Tricks
are in the dawn and day, the night and earth
to make the faded old stage-setting worth
more mock-heroics, more mechanic clicks
of circumstance or valour or despair,
as still the same old phantoms gibber there,
and floats the mote through reeling pageants dressed
in every tatter of deception—sheen
of armies, empires, faiths, hopes, ardours, loves.
And as they drift the innumerable midge
part, torn and tossed by eddies, and reclose
with fury; gleams mysteriously quest
among them till they coalesce and bridge
as with a rainbow nothingness,—life seems
such fragmentary shimmering of vexed dreams
as these, till shattering time's hypnotic night
the drugged soul wakens from its sleep and screams.

THE FLAIL OF THE SHADOWS.

The shadows lengthen. I become
part of their lapse across the world.
The morning lays them to the west,
the evening lays them to the east,
and, ere this flaking gold has ceased
to slash with fire a chasmed cloud,
night on her knees will lay them furled.
Without a pause, year upon year,
their phantom fatal balance swings,
counts out the days and wakes and chills
the linnet's cry and giddy rings
the swallows with their slim swift wings
thread through the green pale twilight sky;
it spurs these fervid bees to hum
on shriller wing through flower and grass,
and tells the unlettered winds that pass
how old the day; it leads the proud
stiff dance of dahlias on their stalks
and wistful casts their petals down;
it winnows on the sun-burnt hills,
in wrinkles of the aged earth
broken with birth and death and birth,
black poppy-seed, white gossamer.
The shadows lengthen on the road
and run out into lakes of gold;
a furtive mist stirs in the air.
Without remorse, without regret,
without remembrance in his eyes,
the traitor sunlight pales and dies,
the shadows seek the knees of night.
O black-fanged hour, that like a goad
through the heart itself of thought is driven,

how have you given and yet not given
the mind a flower's impermanence?
The shadows lengthen. I become
part of their lapse; they make me old;
their rhythmic counterbalance rolled
about the earth enmeshes me
in patterns black with impotence.
Yet even this engined scale that flails
away the world, dust into dust,
your eyes fix, love, and wreck and rust
it lies with all its wheels and bars
because you love me; and the black
pattern it wrought upon my thought
flames and, like flowers by Spring upthrust
through ice-enmortised stones, my dreams
transmute mechanic alternance.
Through love I conquer, and the days'
far-balanced, shadowy creeping chills
no more life's leaping ecstasy—
O hour that crumples up the world
with all its leaves and streams and hills,
so late with flower and bird ablaze,
and with this mist wipes out the stars!

STRIFE.

Naked, livid, dead, outstretched she lay
across the world and on her cave-like mouth
a hideous vapour hung which hid the stars;
rigid she lay as thickly through the mist
throbbed a slow pulse; it was not day nor night
but some unending twilight of eclipse
that crouched colossal as a fallen god
beside her, till the straining darkness cracked
and dawn oozed blood-red on her sightless eyes.
Far off a roar of ebbing seas poured on
in falling thunder; then, like clouds of flies
that hum o'er carrion on the trodden beach
of fetid pools, I saw the fire-flaked dead
rise and fall back in ashes on her face.

BUDDHA.

Between his thumb and his ring-finger he
holds an unopened water-lily and
the upturned hollow of his long left hand
shelters an eye-like seed-pod; fixedly
he gazes on the seed-pod and the flower.
Cross-legged he sits, hour upon mortal hour,
and feels his cool bronze body shine and gleam.

Sometimes the bit of glass stuck in his brow
glistens in little lost lights, sometimes, how
I know not, but he seems about to bow,
or stretch his legs or scratch his head as if
drifted across dim ages came a whiff
of salt sea-sharpness stinging through his dream,
though still as windless water is his dream,
still as the midnight is of desert skies,
and still as death will be when all life dies,
unchangeable, unfathomable. The power
he has of fixing winklessly his flower,
as in some lunar trance unending, ends
by making life a sand heap streaked with stains
of something slain a jackal drags and rends!

A writing on the back of him explains
(this is the way your idol makes amends
for twitching so the frayed string of my wits
by simply sitting still the way he sits!)
that in Pen Yang, twelve hundred and fourteen,
a widow, thankful to an unnamed god
for one son left her by the pest, had seen
him tarnished and abandoned of men's prayers,
mid well-kept gods ranged up the temple stairs,

and caused him to be gilded and made clean
and put into an altar-niche to nod,
or rather not nod, o'er man's fears and tears,
another paltry half a thousand years.

ON THE ISAR.

A river, swift, smooth-sliding, green and clear;
far off, ranged ragged peaks of keenest snow,
unutterably quiet as the glow
dies from the mist-laid valley up the sheer
huge forehead of the dark; black birds that know
some twilight secret, and in moveless row,
fantastic on frail frost-bright poplar tips,
commune with vastness while the river slips
eternally beneath them into gloom
to sounds that build a silence in the air—
these fade as with its holy witchcraft night
o'erflows the world and gives my spirit room
to fathom life as yon star, single there,
fathoms eternity with steadfast light.

PALMS.

A multitudinous twittering of birds
ripples around them and the sunset strikes
their columned shaggy greyness into gold.

The breathless night falls heavy with hushed storm;
Silence: then the great arms of the wind
flung wild across the world. The gaunt palms moan,
they moan, and half in dreams I seem to hear
a thousand little voices parched and thin
laugh fitfully; sharp dusty shivers run
through them as if skeleton fingers twitched
with jagged pause on loose and jangling strings.

They moan and shiver, shiver, moan and sigh
the hot short sighs of half delirious lips,—
a seething noise like a strange brittle foam
of thin glass bubbles bursting on the wind,
or withered hands innumerable that beat
flickeringly on the ashen mouth of death.

They sigh; the darkness thickens; night and storm
and wind hurl monstrous hands upon them, they
bend grinding like a whirlpool shower of sand;

they scream in agonies of drought and pain
till in one wave of swirling surf descends
the engulfing rain. Then breaks with deafening roar
the boom of world-wide tides set thunderingly
on the steep shore of some volcanic isle
in far white wastes of storm-shook shipless seas.

I listen numb with fear and all my dreams
flutter like leaves down to black pools of sleep.

Grey dawn : a hollow purr of windless showers
grows up and dies. One steady rhythmic drop
drips with a liquid drumming and a bird
wakens with bubbling voice a wistful song.

THE LAST PAGE.

A storm strains in her music—night
stricken and eyeless from a height
unthinkable where stars fail falls with cry
of screaming, fire-torn rains that wreck the sky;

her music is a darkness white
with livid, shivered, sword-like light
split on a smouldering place of crawling fire,
a garden leprous with clots of fire;

her pale arms flash, the feverish flight
of flying hands eludes my sight;
she plays, and all her face, night's self's disguise,
mocks the unkennelled hell of rent dense skies

that glare about her music. I
remember not, I know not why,
the thing she plays,—her life? our life? she plays
the burning, thronging riot of our days?

our love? Black memory's coiled flames fly
into my brain; then splintering high
over our heads vast clouds of her music break
crashing the past out quake on quake . . .

And now I see a garden bright
with swaying flowers, tall and white
as faceless thoughts that soar about a dream.
Silence: the blackening fire-clots hiss and steam

under the dreary patter of our days.
The storm is dead, dead memory, dead desire,
trampled like our lilies. I? I seem
to care not what she plays now nodding me
to turn the last page of our destiny.

FAITH.

The shower-soft dawn-cry of the bird-bright spring
holds field and forest haunted, like a flute
elfin that wreathes a dream with melody
unearthly,—field and forest late as mute
as was my heart before I felt your eyes
claim me your own, and your life-lighting breath
with perfume interpenetrate my soul;

the shower-soft dawn-cry of the fire-swift spring
in fields beyond the mountains of to-day,
and in the pathless forests of our youth,
again and still again calls us and calls
unutterably voiced in wind and flower.

But on this shifting shelf of sunless sand
morn stirs not yet, and winter strangles May;
and we life-exiled in far search of truth,—
we stand and watch huge, foam-wrung, green seas shoot
thick-swarmling thunders white against the land,
swirl upon swirl, clutching elusive toll
from scarce dry shores for far-off shores to be.
And by some false, strange chiming in the brain,
some grim caprice of overlabouring thought,
we seem through ways interminable brought
into the very image of the bourn
of all our visions, in all years so sought
with love and faith and patience, strain and pain,—
the goal for which we set life's self at nought!

The low sky deepens, night and emptiness
gigantic tighten black upon the sky;
across the sea, like hurtling mountains, press
all things disastrous, power on grinding power,

in sky, in earth, in ocean, without end
heaved up by fatal tides that creep and cry,
and move the blind world ever blindly on.
Vastness! And yet this ponderous ocean's breath,
this sky's unthinkable abyss strewn
with cyclopean suns that whirl and fly,
as when one strikes the embers of a fire,
and bridged with force annihilating, thrown
weavingly through the dark, know not the goal
whereon (it was the spirit's mirage-dream)
we said must break these monstrous tides of death,
these monstrous senseless moving tides of life.

So thought outsoars itself, our visions ply
eternity, till spiring high and higher
in endless change still seeking changelessness,
we wake and find our very vision gone,
and stand before existence even as now
we stand and watch the black night drink the sea
and chaos o'er the faceless waters stream.

Let us forget, my heart, let us forget
how life is mortgaged to a dream, while yet
the rain-winged spring treads pregnant ecstasy
into the hills, and winds and flowers are free
of even the shadow of a memory;
how should I gaze still o'er the cloud-bleak sea,
O love who are the image of my spring,—
my recreative music deeply heard,—
when these should be your lips and this your hand?

AFTER A YEAR.

I have had sad and precious thoughts to-day,
thoughts of our life's wilfulness, still thoughts
of all its hazardous sharp ways—
terrible joys and the terrible pain it turning brings to us.
Does it obey some secret rhythm of time,
this turning in me of such sad and precious thoughts,
or is it memory's way with life that this clear day

calls up the same day of the year just gone?
Clear day and warm it was too,
day of wildly beating heart and feet that flew
up that steep hill to you,
day when your body strained with birth, your soul strained too,
and my soul fought for you.

If it had but been otherwise!
Who can foresee what fulness might have been,
what rounding-out of impulse,
impulse that now self-poisoned masquerades
in joyless company
of these poor cringing thoughts deserters from
the battling armies of myself—
these thoughts that never live and never die.

And yet all loss, yet all our loss,—
ah, is it only bitterness to feel
that perfect little body spared
life's coiled enigmas—was it happier so,
even as it was?
the fire, the water of the deep lake, they
better than the life-transforming kiss
of some undreamed, some treacherous joy like ours?

O all the things she might have been, my own,
O all the things she must have been being yours,
even if she suffered, if life to her were cruel,—
to her as it at moments is to us,—
still, still should I have wished her life?

Yes, out of some dark need of my own nature
to have her living by me, growing there,
your image, love, and my own image too,—
yes, still would I have wished her life.

But as it is are we, spirit unborn, we three
more strangely one
and we are yours more utterly;
spirit, unsoiled by the world's life
unsoiled by this world's death,
who had no life apart from us, no life
but our own bodies' warm life,—if there be
existence there in the trackless timeless mist,
surely in your memory
no alien shape inhabits,
surely we only fill your memory.

BY THE PACIFIC.

Cloudlike and faint against a cloudless sky,
floated, far-off, white pinnacles of snow,
and nearer, all the great green golden land
sloped seaward through thin sapphire veils of haze
from folded shadowy hills of amethyst.

Vague headlands girdled in the blue dark sea,
the windless, level sea that on the sands
breathed as in dreams, as darkening wave on wave,
a curling, cool, green-glimmering chrysoprase,
poured hissing in smooth broideries of foam,—

white, seething, soft, fantastic lacework drawn
miraculous from the blue loom of the sea.
The sky was laid, a burnished lavender,
in the wet margin of the shining sand;
one sharp grey rock guarded the mauve-grey bay.

We sat and watched the level, gold-flaked sea,
the fairy scrollwork of pink whorls of cloud
above a purple island in the west;
we heard a languorous murmur, rich and strange
with more than earthly peace; we watched and heard,
and we were tranquil as the windless sea.

Far-off white mountain peaks against the sky
floated like clouds; the great green golden land
sloped slowly from dim hills to where the sea
breathed slumberous song upon the sunlit sands.

SHIPWRECK.

An uncontrollable distress
divides me from myself,
the relentless spectre of my nothingness
blackens my most luminous desire,
and though my straining wings strike drops of fire,
a night crawls in between me and myself.

Nothing to grieve over
has befallen me,
I can recover
from memory
no token that this evil thing would be,
and yet my soul founders in an unfathomable sea.

I have thrown the driftwood of my thought
upon my hungry passion for more life
that it should smoulder not, and caught
up on the flames I made a way
against the soul-encircling night,—as straw
I flung my life into the blaze, and awe
gripped not my hand, nor fear that heaping all on life
I lose my life.

Now somehow from the specious day I made
where my being was to be fulfilled,
a cold deep-smiting blade
of dark has cloven me, and killed
the fire I made.

Distress uncontrollable
rots me within,
and a wind blows up the ashes of my thought
bitter on the lips, blinding in the eyes,—

I feel a night begin
in the very cells of my being where were fought
my ancient battles with my nothingness in æons
dead.

From the lost shore of other lives no light,—
only interminably vast, black, soundless, tideless around me
spread

myself—the inner midnight of myself—
pitiless as God and bottomless as death.

WESTWARD.

By hints diverse, glimmerings and inspirations,
I cross my spirit's undiscovered lands,—
shorn peaks and corn and vermeil-smitten rivers.

For me as for a traveller westering,
slow darkness locks the imprisoned sky, sharp dawn
strikes like a wing my spirit bare, and light
lives, and again endures night's reticence,
with sequence within sequence on a stress
inscrutable of urgency that throbs
the mirage of existence into life.
And risen oft to unremembered places,
between stark light, stark darkness faltering
I tenant, like a vexed somnambulist,
cirque within cirque of self-surviving self,—
a labyrinthine dark with mirrors set . . .

But by diverse ways, glimpses, inspirations,
a music untransmutable is clear,
vast spans of rhythmic consonance that rear,
high, huge above self's dwarfed continent,
unshatterable vaulting of new dreams;

and by that sky's co-ordinance I move,
my life become an instinct and a need,
a motive incommunicable, freed
of past and future and intelligence,—
a promptitude of force, and, issuing thence,
joy, vision, love, hope, strength, serenity.

PRAIRIE FIRES IN NOVEMBER.

To this, my fire-wild heart's wind-footed love,
you would be grass that lightly flares and dies
(all black the land behind is, black and dead—
a beggar's quivering palm to the snow that flies;
so are my dreams as snow-cold clouds above
our lifeless lands). And you, my love, whose head
is like a poppy, fluttering flaring thing—
O flame-soft shadow of a thrilling wing!—
you to be seared up in a flash of pain,
you to be snowed on by my sunless dreams,
my meadow-love, my flower amongst the grain?

Hour upon hour the reaper steel goes through,
swinging and singing by the hill-cool streams . . .
Better the flame, the blackened land, than you,
you lie here in the scythe's swath, wilted, left,—
better my fire-wild heart, and like a weft
of wind-laid sorrow on the barren stain
that was our garden, better the snow of dreams!

IN A TRANSEPT.

As in those dreams, Ilaria del Carretto,
that come to tired sleepers and endure
till dawn puts tremulous hands on fluttering eyes,
and smiles her wanest in a white chill chamber—
while dread day stays his bright foot at the door
because some shreds of waning visions trail
still down sleep's sunset cloud-world—you have slept
and dreamed your dream, Ilaria del Carretto,
and round you is the radiance of its peace.
Four hundred years at your dim transept's door,
your many-bolted, huge, nail-studded door,
wait like the stricken rabble when kings die;
still dance twelve chubby putti with their toys
about your marble as when Quercia's smile
in some obscure bottega greeted them
trooping beneath his chisel into life;
still through your church the wavering of a voice
that wails and falls and wails and falls again
starts flocks of flapping echoes from the vaults,
and hearing them your timid spaniel, crouched
against your feet, turns up uneasy eyes
to many-jewelled pyres of windows high,
blood-red, sky-blue with vigilant saint and sage.
And, as the last light falling through them crawls
across the white floor's storied marquetry
to let its rainbows die upon your face,
your sleep is beautiful, your locks are smooth,
your great ruche crisp, your hands are pure as when,
in his sharp-windowed sanguine palace near,
for the last time Guinigi folded them.

WINDY NIGHT

What lies beyond? These window-sills that lie
a quivering white against the dawn, are they
the threshold of our dream or will day
from all its golden tangles of hindmost day,
and only endless in the waking eye
forever devastate? What our way
has done to us for hours of men that lay
in death, the waves where, here, we did not die?

This white house is our path-way, night by night,
for it glowed on before us like a streak
of gloriously warm across this when we
"What lies beyond?" Though they their farther light
even here with death? Love, love, look up at me!
This is life's sea's edge if you will but speak!

MIRAGE.

Fabricating sun
and spinning star,
waking a mirage out of cataclysm
in nothingness, as one,
two, then a million systems, comets, seas of planetary mist
integrate and disintegrate in a breath,—
making to mar
the thing made with huge empty strains that web
eternity from half-dreamed *must*
to *are*,—
so interpenetrate
co-ordination,
dissolution
and seem brief life, long death.

Long death, brief life—the flicker meted each
gigantic sun, sea, mountain, infinitesimal love—
else all beneath, above,
a universal echo and the silence-sealing speech
of sun or sea or lip,—
save in the intershifting here a slip,
that weeds a budding order from the grooves,
shakes the white equilibrium whence began
(the shadow of the whole across the one
and the first dream of thought-enfettered man)
all things where all beginning still is not,
since what so seems to seem, the individual lot,
in the tick's focus of a billion years
cannot be.

Also this rainbow of humanity—
this gay prismatic shimmer of a mind

across the timeless dull atomic rain—
what is it but conversion into pain,
that grinds with infinite whirls impalpable
the granite of existence into dust,
of tensions twisting systems and behind
still systems, spinning bridges o'er a dream
the friction of whose passage sows with mist
of nebulæ (vague gyroscopic grist
parthenogenic in immensity)
its own inanity?

Surf on a wind-eaten shore
drummed through a cleft in mountains, roar
of self-tormented tides that sway
on the huge oscillation of æonic law—
so strums itself the ungraspable mind,
intones the eternal welter whereof it
(as space-vast torsions stud with sparks the night)
is self-unseeing light.

IN THE CAB OF NO. 3303.

THE BREATH OF THE BAY.

Faster the storming piston whirls and whirls
our roaring drivers; fierce and wide we swing
on crashing side-thrusts; bright the lithe rods spring
forward like tigers; far our head-light hurls
its white sword through the darkness; earth unfurls
reelingly fence and field; the blue rails ring;
the black ties scream up under us and fling
time back where night, black-eddying, streams and swirls . . .

a house: a mist: a streak of sea: a rock:
trees hurtle at us, flicker, flee—a light!
Then the low-grinding set seeth of our brakes;
a tunnel's earthquake thunder cracked with shock
and split with glare; then wind, sea-wind, and bright
a star that on a hilltop leaps and shakes.

STRONGHOLDS.

This grim grey tower that sentinels the sky
is as my bitter spirit is to-day;
O sheer gigantic symbol of the way
men live with one another thou art I!
I am thy steep defiance to the world,
I am thy bastioned place when treachery
writhes like a snake through all that is without.
Are not my doors like thine of fire-hard steel?
Does not my crag-rough spirit o'er the rout
of foam-fast life gloom and behold life die?
Tower of my heart, the clamorous ages reel
in drunken battle-frenzy like a tide
around thee, foaming, broken, till they hide
their very being in the bones of thee;
tower of my heart, thou bitterest tower, the sea
alone has thy foundation and thy strength.
Yet hast thou, tower, hast thou been left at length,
empty and palsied in the empty land?
Thou who couldst all the hosts of hate withstand
and roll them from thee backward, shalt thou be,
because thy foes are dead, a memory,
a withered sign of strife that is no more?
And if thou crumblest, what meant then the fight
that, helmeted and plumed with hideous wrong,
swarmed once around thee, tossed and broke in flight?
What means our world-wide war with world-wide brute
if emptiness can waste thee at the root?
And yet the senseless stars that know thee not
have seen ten thousand thousand, strong as thou
art in thine unrent tenantless estate,
waste as the rocks waste, as the mountains rot,
foredoomed to ruin having once been great.

The chill sky changes not, however thou
because they have forsaken thee must change—
as still beyond my fortress soul a thought
grey as eternity lies like a mist
over the land and sea of life and death;
and I know not my thought save only now,
when all things fail and at life's steel-shod door
death sits, life's iron warder, now when breath
is grimly drawn in seerless fortitude,
I breathe as thou dost, waiting, dreaming how
the mist will rise and bid us also raise
our eyes above the past's peaks seamed and strewn
with all disaster. Tower, behold I bow
and pray to what I know is not divine,
life's grey dumb strength whereof thou art a sign
held up to God that He may know at last
His creature than Himself sublimer grown . . .
Tower of my soul, the prayer I make is thine,
and, when the unanswering future is the past,
the prayer that I shall make thy very own!

POSSESSION.

Last night I knew that it would rain to-day—
as we sat there, I knew that it would rain;
though I had prayed that he might die, dismay
took hold of me to think that he was dead;
I thought of simple things as if for dread,
till quietly she spoke: “The way is plain . . .
death has removed the shadow from our way,
death and my love.” No voice of love or pain
lived in her words. They fell on me like flame,
and on her cheeks and on her mouth I shed
the kisses of dead years that died in vain
for all my love, while she was his to claim,
if with his lips he merely named her name—
his!—she stood like stone from foot to head,
till in her throat a sudden fluttering came
and went . . . and left her lying on the bed.

She did not speak—she did not weep—the house
was silent with a chill that stopped my heart;
I know not what it was that made me start
as I drew up her cold face to my face
softly—did I dream he called below?
Why else should I have said as if to grace
the clamour of my blood with some disguise
of trembling memory: “Love, love, do you
remember when the year began to drowse
toward winter, one still night we sat, we two,
with him, since there was nothing left to do?
and you, without a sign of eyes or hand
to show you knew what fearful visions fed
upon my heart, watched me? We talked and smiled
like quiet friends the twilight hours beguiled,

though like a flame I felt your speechless eyes
madden my brain with things that could not be . . .
O had I known that you could understand,
that you could thus have loved me for a blow ^
I did not strike and could not !"—It must be
I half forgot she told me he was dead.

And still as with wild fingers I unbound
her hair and set her chilling bosom free,
and drew her soft, bare, pulseless arms round me,
she did not stir—she did not speak. My heart
beat thickly in my lips against her mouth
that seemed to mutely beg me to depart,
I know not why,—I know not if she knew ;
only I know her eyes were like the South
when storms pile up great glooms without a sound,
and flickering lights played in them faintly—fear
seized me again, she saw it in my eyes,
she felt it in the slackening of my kiss,
as wildly with a strange, uncoiling hiss
in sank her breath upon my faltering lips—
she clutched me sinking, like a shell that slips
into the sea, through dumb glooms shaken slow
upon her struggling bosom's ebb and flow . . .

It is dawn now—I feel within my brain
the senseless, blank monotony of rain.
Her naked breasts lie still against the light,
shadowless and smoothly pale—her eyes
flutter with the failing of her sighs
faintly—her cheeks are weary and some soil
of tears hangs in their pallor—vaguely warm
her breath creeps on my eyes—I hardly dare
to look where on this pillow streams her hair

sickening me with a sense of things that coil.
I only see her now as eyes may see,—
for something has departed with the night,
departed, and I know not what may be,—
she lies so still—and all things are so vain!
She sleeps so calm,—it cannot be that she . . .
But God, I shall go mad, if on the pane
beats, with such senseless futile grief, the rain!

TRANSLATIONS.

FROM VINCENT MALLARMÉ: POÉME.

I. THE FLOWERS.

From avalanches of the ancient sky,
golden, and from an endless snow of stars
born, lo! the first day called these challenges
for earth new-born and virgin of her stars.

Wild sun-bursts, like the sun is slain of terror,
the day divine of souls in time called
silver as blue of soaring verities
swept over blushing dawn-lands undeliled!

These dyed-rose blossoms, this myrtle bud
gleaming, and like a woman's flesh, the rose,
flashed as daughter of some garden throne,
fierce, and bedewed with fierce bright dew of blood!

Thou modest the tall lily's nothing white
that losing wings a sea of light where sleep
pallid horizons of the perfumed blue
or sleep dream-like no man moves that weep!

Flowers on sharp wings and sensors swung,
Fatter, flowers, from this garden of the shades!
Mid twilight glows the repeat echo fades,—
enough eyes clear halo flesh among!

Fatter, thou modest, in thy just beam and calm
challenges that way a pale of sleep down,—
these thy great flowers—and deem thou modest a helm
to the poet's weary soul like withers hour by hour.

II. LE TOMBEAU D' EDGAR POE.

Such as to Himself eternity shall change
the Poet strikes with naked sword and sure
his age amazed that never knew this pure
voice crowning death with subtle art and strange !
Him they, base coil of hydras, hearing him,
angel, give sense more rare to tribal words
acclaim now drunk with brews where thick as curds
dishonours upon incantations swim.

From hostile sod and hostile cloud, ah grief !
if this our thought hew not a bas-relief
for Poe's tomb reared resplendent on life's shore ;
calm block in dim disaster fallen to earth,
this granite sets a term forevermore
to Blasphemy's black flight through time's rebirth.

FROM PALAZZESCHI: POEMI.

I. LA CENA DEGLI INFELICI.

At their long table seated,
long table and narrow,
the unhappy are eleven.
With luxury's glamour
the table is spread.
Exuberant flowers,
gold vases and silver.
In a row the eleven
in perfect rigidity
changelessly sit
without ever turning
to this side or that side.
Palm against palm,
with finger-tips touching,
their elbows together,
their eyebrows all arching
and all their lips drawn,
they watch each dish passing.
One only abstracted
with his fork on the cloth
makes over and over,
traces untiring
the same letter O.
And one on the white cloth
his napkin-ring rolls
up and down, up and down
rolls it and rolls.
The dishes before them
change hurriedly ever;
soups steaming and purées

delicious and pâtés
most tasty by thousands.
But food the eleven
touch never, immobile
regarding askance
the swift endless passing
of dishes before them.
From gardens forbidden
herbs skilfully seasoned,
woodcock and pheasant
pass by in the dishes
of these the unhappy;
most tender of green things
and sweetmeats the rarest,
incredible sweetmeats,
fruits red as a ruby,
wines too of all colours
in glasses, in crystal,—
champagne, liqueur, coffee.
The eleven immobile
sit palm against palm,
with finger-tips touching,
with elbows together,
in perfect rigidity
not ever once turning
to this side or that side,
their eyebrows all arching
and all their lips drawn;
with no vestige of wonder
their eyes look askance
at the dish that is passing.

II. LA REGINA CARMELA.

The tower that is highest
of the palace vast and splendid
is unchangingly her throne.
The queen Carmela
leaves her tower not an instant,
never she comes down it never.
The palace great and regal
on the sea's edge rises grandly,
with rare marbles richly ornate
and its towers unequal are;
close behind it stand up mountains.
The queen Carmela
leaves her tower not an instant,
never she comes down it never;
about her falls a mantle,
most ample, falls, most precious,
of scarlet spun
with veils of scarlet swathed and swathed about.
High up there the wild wind rages,
lifts and billows out her mantle,
lifts its veils
and her yellow unbound hair;
to the wild wind she is a prey,
and now she seems a flame
that is shaken by the wind
and now a tongue of fire
rising from the mighty palace.
The sea-folk gaze upon her,
she is like a lighthouse to them there on high,
a sinister dark lamp to all her people.
The hill-folk gaze upon her,
from the level lands they see the little queen.

And they stand and look and wonder
staring up with eyes of pain
at the scarlet robe wind-shaken
and her yellow, loosened, thick and flying hair . . .
Weeping, marvelling, her people
watch their little queen, their trivial queen Carmela.



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